

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 SY-05 AID-05 PC-01 A-01
OPR-02 SIL-01 LAB-04 MCT-01 DHA-02 TRSE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /080 W
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P R 251100Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1812

INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 04205

C O R R E C T E D C O P S FOR REF B (SAO PAULO 01328

VICE SAO PAULO 01296

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BR

SUBJECT: NATIONAL DAY OF STRUGGLE PROTESTS A SUCCESS FOR
STUDENTS

REF: A. BRASILIA 04054

B. SAO PAULO 01328

1. SUMMARY. STUDENTS IN MOST MAJOR BRAZILIAN CITIES HELD PEACEFUL ON-CAMPUS ASSEMBLES MAY 19 COMMEMORATING THEIR "NATIONAL DAY OF STRUGGLE" WHILE LARGE, IN SOME CASES MASSIVE, CONTINGENTS OF SECURITY FORCES LOOKED ON. CLASHES BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS WERE RECORDED, HOWEVER, IN SALVADOR AND SAO PAULO, RESULTING IN APPROXIMATELY 40 ARRESTS, INCLUDING SEVEN JOURNALISTS, AND SOME INJURIES. DURING THE PAST WEEK POLICE HAVE APPARENTLY INITIATED A POLICY OF PICKING UP STUDENTS FOR QUESTIONING AND THEN RELEASING THEM SEVERAL HOURS LATER SO AS TO AVOID GROUNDS FOR POTENTIAL FUTURE PROTESTS. AS HAS BEEN THE

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CASE SINCE THE STUDENT PROTESTS BEGAN LAST MARCH, SAO PAULO WAS THE SITE OF THE MAJOR MANIFESTATION THURSDAY (REFTEL B). END SUMMARY.

2. DEMONSTRATIONS SLATED FOR UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES IN MOST MAJOR BRAZILIAN CITIES AND THE INTERIOR OF THE STATES OF SAO PAULO, MINAS GERAIS AND RIO GRANDE DO SUL MARKING

THE MAY 19 "NATIONAL DAY OF STRUGGLE" PROCEEDED FOR THE MOST PART PEACEFULLY AND WITH WIDE STUDENT SUPPORT. THE UNIVERSAL DEMANDS OF THE DEMONSTRATORS WERE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF IMPRISONED STUDENT AND WORKER PROTESTORS, END TO ALL TORTURE, AMNESTY FOR ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS AND EXILES, RESTORATION OF DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES AND CONVOCATION OF A FREE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION, PLUS SCATTERED CRIES FOR AN END TO THE CURRENT MILITARY REGIME.

3. THE ONLY OFF-CAMPUS DEMONSTRATIONS, ALL OF WHICH RESULTED IN CLASHES WITH THE POLICE, OCCURRED IN SAO PAULO, SAO CARLOS AND SALVADOR; OTHER PUBLIC CONCENTRATIONS SCHEDULED FOR RIO AND PORTO ALEGRE WERE MOVED TO ON-CAMPUS SITES AFTER BEING PROHIBITED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES. AN ESTIMATED 2,000 STUDENTS WERE DRIVEN FROM THE AREA OF THE USP LAW SCHOOL IN DOWNTOWN SAO PAULO BY POLICE USING TEAR GAS AND WATER CANNONS, "WITH SUCH VIOLENCE AS HAS NOT BEEN SEEN SINCE 1968," ACCORDING TO THE LIBERAL FOLHA DE SAO PAULO. ANOTHER 8,000 STUDENTS MET PEACEABLY WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE USP MEDICAL SCHOOL WHILE 70,000 POLICE WERE STATIONED THROUGHOUT THE CITY TO "GUARANTEE PUBLIC ORDER", ACCORDING TO THE STATE SECRETARY OF PUBLIC SECURITY. THIRTY STUDENTS WERE ARRESTED, QUESTIONED, AND RELEASED SEVERAL HOURS LATER. IN SAO CARLOS, 600 STUDENTS STAGED A MARCH THROUGH THE CITY'S STREETS BEFORE BEING BROKEN UP BY POLICE ARMED WITH TEAR GAS AND CLUBS.

4. IN SALVADOR, STUDENTS HELD A PEACEFUL PROTEST ASSEMBLY, BUT SHORTLY AFTER IT ENDED POLICE ATTACKED THE DISPERSING
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CROWDS, CONFISCATING PHOTOGRAPHERS' FILMS OF THE EVENT AND ARRESTING SEVEN JOURNALISTS, ALL OF WHOM WERE QUICKLY RELEASED. THE AUTHORITATIVE O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO DESCRIBED THE INCIDENT AS POLICE VIOLENCE AGAINST THE "ABSOLUTELY ORDERLY CONDUCT THAT CHARACTERIZED THE STUDENTS' PUBLIC ACT," AND EVEN THE STATE SECURITY SECRETARY ADMITTED POLICE EXCESSES.

5. THE VARIOUS EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY SHOWED CAREFUL PLANNING AND COORDINATION, AS SIGNS AND SLOGANS WERE IDENTICAL AND THE SONG "PARA NAO DIZER QUE NAO FALEI DE FLORES," BANNED BY THE FEDERAL CENSORS SOME TIME AGO, WAS SUNG AT MANY OF THE DEMONSTRATORS. A NATIONAL STUDENTS MEETING IS TENTATIVELY PLANNED FOR JUNE 4 IN BELO HORIZONTE, AT WHICH TIME ATTEMPTS WILL BE MADE TO RECONSTITUTE THE OUTLAWED NATIONAL STUDENTS UNION (UNE). ANOTHER NATIONAL DAY OF STRUGGLE IS ALSO PLANNED FOR JUNE 15, TO BE FOLLOWED THREE DAYS LATER IN SAO PAULO BY A NATIONAL MEETING TO DRAW UP A PETITION DEMANDING DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES

AND A GENERAL AMNESTY TO BE SENT TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL.

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 CU-02 SY-05 AID-05 PC-01
A-01 OPR-02 SIL-01 LAB-04 MCT-01 DHA-02 TRSE-00
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6. SUPPORT FOR THE PROTESTS, PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED BY SEVERAL ECCLESIASTICS, THE SAO PAULO CHAPTEER OF THE BRAZILIAN BAR ASSOCIATION (OAB) AND VARIOUS MDB PARLAMENTARIANS, IS BEGINNING TO COME FROM PREVIOUSLY SILENT SECTORS. EARLIER IN THE WEEK, A GROUP OF 60 SAO PAULO PROFESSORS AND INTELLECTUALS PUBLISHED AN OPEN LETTER SUPPORTING THE STUDENTS DEMANDS AND CONDEMNING THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS "SYSTEMATIC TRANSGRESSIONS AGAINST DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES." SOME REPRESENTATIVES OF OPPOSITION FACTIONS WITHIN THE SAO PAULO METALWORKERS, BANKWORKERS AND PRINTERS UNIONS APPEARED AT THE DEMONSTRATION TO ANNOUNCE THEIR SUPPORT, AS DID SEVERAL OTHER UNION FIGURES IN SALVADOR. THE CARDINAL ARCHBISHIP OF SAO PAULO REAFFIRMED HIS SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENTS' GOALS AS DID THE CITY'S AUXILIARY BISHOP; THE CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OF RIO, HOWEVER, EXPRESSED HIS FEARS THAT THE STUDENTS "WERE BEING USED BY OTHER POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS." IN BOTH SAO PAULO AND SALVADOR, EYEWITNESSES SAID THAT PASSERSBY JOINED STUDENTS IN ABORTIVE MARCHES AFTER THE STUDENTS HAD BEEN ATTACKED BY THE POLICE AND DISPERSED DURING THEIR EARLIER CONCENTRATIONS.

7. THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN EXHIBITING INCREASINGLY OPEN
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CONCERN OVER THE STUDENT MANIFESTATIONS -- IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT PRESIDENT GEISEL PERSONNALLY FOLLOWED THURSDAY'S DEVELOPMENTS, RECEIVING FREQUENT REPORTS FROM THE SNI, THE FIRST INDICATION OF PRESIDENTIAL INTEREST. WITHIN THE PAST WEEK, SECURITY FORCES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY HAVE BEGUN TO PICK UP STUDENTS FOR QUESTIONING, USUALLY RELEASING THEM WITHIN 12 HOURS. MASSIVE FORCES HAVE BEEN DEPLOYED TO CONTAIN THE DEMONSTRATIONS, 70,000 POLICE BEING USED IN THE CITY OF SAO PAULO ALONE, AND FOR THE FIRST TIME DURING THE CURRENT SERIES OF DEMONSTRATIONS POLICE ENTERED A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS (THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY IN CAMPINAS) TO IMPEDE AN ASSEMBLY. MOREOVER, UNIVERSITY RECTORS AT THE PUC IN RIO AND THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY IN BRASILIA HAVE THREATENED TO EXPEL LARGE NUMBERS OF STUDENTS UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF DECREE LAW 477, LAST USED AGAINST A STUDENT IN 1971.

8. COMMENT. THE TACIT POLICE-STUDENT AGREEMENT OF THE 1975-76 DEMONSTRATIONS -- THAT PROTESTS BE CONFINED TO INTERNAL UNIVERSITY MATTERS AND NOT TAKE PLACE OFF CAMPUS- APPEARS TO HAVE BROKEN DOWN. THE MAY 19 DEMONSTRATIONS REPRESENT A DEFINITE ORGANIZATIONAL ADVANCE FOR STUDENTS: LARGE NUMBERS TURNED OUT IN SUPPORT OF WHAT WAS CLEARLY A WELL ORGANIZED AND COORDINATED NATIONAL EXPRESSION OF DISCONTENT WITH THE PRESENT REGIME, AND THE RESULTING LIMITED CLASHES HAVE NOT AS YET RESULTED IN A POLICE CRACKDOWN. THE STUDENT LEADERS ARE OBVIOUSLY CONFIDENT THAT THEIR ORGANIZING PLANS CAN GO AHEAD AND HAVE OPENLY ADMITTED THEIR INTENTION TO REFORM THE OUTLAWED UNE; SOME FACTIONS CLEARLY WANT TO TEST THE LIMITS OF PERMISSIBLE ACTIVITY.

9. THE STUDENTS POSITION, HOWEVER, REMAINS PRECARIOUS: MID-YEAR EXAMS, WHICH HAVE A DAMPENING EFFECT ON ACTIVISM, BEGIN IN JUNE, THEIR NATIONAL ORGANIZATION IS STILL NOT SOLIDIFIED, AND THE WHOLE MOVEMENT COULD FIZZLE OUT FROM LACK OF CONCRETE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND DRAMA.

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THE NEED TO MAINTAIN INTEREST IN THE MOVEMENT AND A SENSE OF PROGRESS AND INVOLVEMENT COULD ACCOUNT FOR THE APPARENT DESIRE OF SOME FACTIONS TO STAGE STREET DEMONSTRATIONS RIGHT NOW AND PROVOKE THE POLICE INTO REPRESSIVE MEASURES. THE SECURITY FORCES, WHILE SUCCESSFULLY CONTAINING THE MAY 19 DEMONSTRATIONS TO CAMPUSES IN ALMOST ALL CASES, APPARENTLY SEE THE INCREASING LEVEL OF STUDENT ACTIVISM AS A DIRECT PROVOCATION AND CHALLENGE. WHILE THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF COMMUNIST CONTROL OF THE STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, SOME ACTIVISTS LIKELY HOLD COMMUNIST SYMPATHIES

AND SEVERAL PCB MEMBERS (INCLUDING SAO PAULO MDB STATE DEPUTY ALBERTO GOLDMAN) HAVE BEEN ADVISING STUDENTS ON TACTICS AND GOALS. THUS, IF THE MOVEMENT DOES NOT GRADUALLY LOSE STEAM ON ITS OWN, WHICH IS POSSIBLE, BUT INSTEAD WERE TO CONTINUE TO EXPAND AND INCLUDE OTHER DISSATISFIED ELEMENTS OF BRAZILIAN SOCIETY, THE MEDIUM-TERM RESULT WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE MORE SERIOUS CLASHES BETWEEN SECURITY SOURCES AND PROTESTORS WITH MORE FREQUENT ARRESTS. END COMMENT.

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